



View from the Blackdown Hills

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Issue No 132 January 2016

AONB celebrates 25 years

Festive fun for Scouts



■ IST Hemyock Scouts ended the year with fun and games along with Christmas dinner cooked by their leaders.

Held at Deepsellick Farm by courtesy of Mr and Mrs Grabham, long time supporters of the group, the outdoor meeting saw the young people enjoying turkey with all the traditional trimmings under a tarpaulin

Christmas songs, hats and crackers all added to the festive fun around the camp fire, whilst Secret Santa made sure everyone went home with a gift.

THIS year marks the 25th anniversary of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation and to celebrate the team have an exciting year ahead.

The AONB have teamed up with Otter Brewery and Otter Valley Ice Cream with money from the sales of special anniversary ales and ice creams going directly into the Blackdown Hills Countryside Fund, administered by Devon Community Foundation, to support wildlife, heritage and community projects.

The Blackdown Hills was awarded AONB designation in 1991 to protect the area's scenic beauty and landscape.

The Blackdown Hills is home to nationally important wildlife and archaeology and, with its characteristic buildings, small fields and network of hedges, the area is considered to be the archetypal English rural landscape.

Since 1991 a Partnership, made up of representatives from local authorities, national agencies, organisations and communities with an interest in the Blackdown Hills, has guided the work carried out by a small team of staff to protect the special qualities of the AONB.

As well as protecting the environment, the AONB team has provided £1.8million in funding to help boost the local economy and has, with the help of partners, helped to bring a further £10million to support rural businesses and protect the environment.

AONB manager Linda Bennett said: "The 25th anniversary of the designation of the Blackdown Hills as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has given us a wonderful opportunity to encourage more people to enjoy and visit the beautiful landscape and rich wildlife and heritage of the area.

"As part of our 2016 celebrations we will be producing a bumper programme of countryside events ranging from family wildlife discovery days to a community heritage forum – we look forward to welcoming many new faces.

"Over the past 25 years the AONB Partnership has worked together with volunteers, local people, businesses and visitors to help safeguard this stunning area of countryside and support the local economy. We have done this through innovative projects, grant programmes and partnership working, but none of this would have been possible without the support of our funders in particular central government and local authorities, and the Blackdown Hills community.

"For the next 25 years we look forward to working with even more individuals and partners and together rising to the challenges to ensure we continue to conserve and enhance this outstanding landscape for our own and future generations."

Turn to pages 4 & 5 for more details about the AONB 25th anniversary



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KEEP WARM THIS WINTER WITH SOUTHERN FUELS
(SEE PAGE 11 FOR MORE DETAILS)

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New star shines on top of village church

FOR many years at Christmas time an illuminated star has shone from the top of St Mary's church, Hemyock, until four years ago when the star fell into disrepair.

Now, following fundraising and a successful application for National Lottery funding, a new star has been commissioned and now shines from the top of the church.

Hemyock resident, Nick Jones, a Director and Founder of SC Group, the engineering design company based in neighbouring Dunkeswell, was approached and accepted the challenge of producing the new star.

The design had to be structurally safe and strong enough to withstand the worst of the Devon weather.

Working from the scaled-down model provided, one of SC Group's Mechanical Design Engineers, Tim Stokes, soon had the finished design completed.

Development Workshop Technician, Luke Ridler, then offered up his own time to fabricate the whole assembly, which is in aluminium and includes a very intricate central node - the key to the whole construction.

Consideration was taken that the eight metre high star had to be hauled up the 30 metre tall church tower in pieces and then assembled in situ for safety reasons.

The grand switch-on took place after a 'Lights Parade' with lanterns, samba bands and local musicians leading a procession of more than 1,000 people to the church where an illuminated flower ascended to the star, using a block and pulley device. This in turn switched on the six-point three-dimensional star to a



■ THE new star shines above Hemyock Church thanks to SC Group

great cheer from the crowd.

Mr Jones said: "We're delighted to help our local community in this way. The star looks simply fantastic at night and is another demonstration of SC Groups capabilities when it comes to solving unique engineering problems in very short timescales."



■ CHRISTMAS CAME EARLY: Dougie Bale (Chardstock Vintage Tractor and Machinery Club), Michelle Reeve (Chardstock Street Fayre Team), Sue Alexander (Chardstock Christmas Tree and Childrens' Presents), Sharon Ewart (Hospiscare), John Williamson (Chardstock Community Hall Trust), Jonathan Milford (Chardstock Newsletter), Catherine Davies (ARC Axminster) and Mike Everton (The George Inn Skittles League).

Charities benefit from £6,000 street fayre pot

CHARDSTOCK Street Fayre presentation evening was described as "a wonderful social occasion".

Held at The George Inn, Chardstock, the street fayre team presented cheques totalling £6,000.

Team member Graham Vyse said: "We wish to thank Chris, Shelley, Anne and John West of The George Inn for hosting the event and providing a lovely buffet."

"At this wonderful social occasion, cheques totalling £6,000 were presented to representatives of the chosen good causes for 2015."

Sharon Ewart, representing Hospiscare accepted a cheque for £2,000 as did Catherine Davies representing ARC Axminster; these were the main beneficiaries and were chosen in memory of a friend, and a former Vice-Chairman of Chardstock Street Fayre, Ray Smith, who sadly passed away earlier in the year.

A further £2,000 has been shared between the following good causes: Cancer Research UK (the chosen charity of Chardstock Vintage Tractor & Machinery Club), Chardstock

Youth Club, Chardstock Community Hall Trust, The George Inn Skittles League, Chardstock Newsletter and the Chardstock Christmas Tree and Childrens' Presents Fund.

Mr Vyse added: "This has been a particularly memorable year in the life of Chardstock with the duck race, summer of love party and street fayre."

"The street fayre team is most grateful for the support, given so freely, by so many in our community."

Network group discuss important issues in the hills

A NETWORKING group recently met to discuss issues affecting parishes in the Blackdown Hills. Representatives from 15 Blackdown Hills parishes attended an informal meeting of the Blackdown Hills Parishes Network.

The evening opened with a brief introduction about the network from the Chair of the BHPN Steering Group, Heather Stallard, followed by a presentation from James Maben of the Blackdown Hills Natural Futures project.

Mr Maben described the first year of this new project designed to increase awareness and understanding of the Blackdown Hills AONB environment through local projects while also completing a number of surveys of the flora and fauna of the Blackdown Hills AONB.

After a break for refreshments, attendees were invited to share their knowledge and perception on some important topics on which local MPs Rebecca Pow and Neil Parish have requested feedback from Blackdown Hills residents.

On planning matters there was concern about the lack of inclusion of parish councils in explaining planning outcomes, together with a perception that some Local Authority departments are understaffed and thus not able to consider applications fully. Frequently the special status of the AONB landscapes appear not to be properly acknowledged; residents are unhappy about the lack of influence they have on many applications.

Questioned about HGV traffic, delegates identified a number of locations where there are problems with high levels of HGV traffic, poor sat nav routing for large vehicles, excessive traffic speed, lack of off-road parking and worries over declining road maintenance.

On public transport, there is a clear need to improve connectivity from the west end of the Blackdowns at Culmstock/Uffculme with Tiverton Parkway, and Bishopswood/Churchinford/Smeatharpe with Taunton. Overall people felt that local knowledge was often ignored by authorities when consulting, resulting in less effective schemes and developments.

General communication between the Blackdown parishes was discussed, many realise that internet and mobile communications are now the official media of choice, however many parts of the AONB simply do not receive good enough – or any – broadband service and mobile signals are very patchy. There is a significant number of people who do not use any form of digital communication; social media are found to be very useful for many communications, however this excludes a great many in the community. Most people agree that word of mouth is still a very powerful means of communication, as is the availability of the View from the Blackdowns newspaper.

■ The BHPN Steering Group has contacted all Blackdowns parishes in the AONB requesting their views on the specific questions related to the MPs' feedback topics above, to be submitted before 1st February 2016.

If you were unable to attend the BHPN meeting in November and wish to respond to these questions through your Parish Council, please ask for a copy from the Clerk or view them at www.blackdownsonline.org.uk.

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Clayhidon wedding stationer is named 'best in the west'

A CLAYHIDON stationery designer has been judged best in the west.

Casey Blackmore's wedding stationery design business Oyster & Pearl has been judged best in the south west in the Wedding Industry Awards.

Barely a year after she opened her design studio in Clayhidon she has shot to the top of her profession by winning the regional final

in the Wedding Stationery of the Year category.

She was presented with the award in a gala evening at Maunsel House, near Bridgwater and said she was "over the moon".

Casey spent ten years with a top London design agency before moving back to Devon to set up on her own, specialising in elaborate bespoke wedding invitation packages. She chose

the name Oyster & Pearl to suggest "the anticipation of opening something up and the excitement of discovering something extraordinary inside".

Selected as regional winner through a combination of feedback from clients and the assessment of expert judges, she now goes through to the national final at London's Café de Paris later this month.



■ **SANTA'S** presence helped to raise more than £700 towards an outside classroom and sensory garden at St Andrew's Primary School in Chardstock.

During the school's recent Christmas fayre, the children enjoyed a special visit from Santa whilst their parents browsed craft stalls whilst enjoying a glass of mulled wine.

Santa is photographed enjoying a well-deserved refreshment in the company of excited children.



■ **CASEY** Blackmore from Oyster and Pearl with her award

Church supports Christmas cards

ST MARY'S Church Hemyock has sponsored the printing of charity Christmas cards to raise money for a medical centre in Uganda.

The Potter's Village at Kisoro, Uganda, has been supported by St Mary's Church, Hemyock for many years. It is a Child Crisis and Medical Centre for helpless children.

This year St Mary's has sponsored the printing of Christmas cards on sale for the charity featuring photos of youngsters in their care.

They have been on sale throughout the country and will hopefully provide a large sum of money to support the work the charity carries out.

Huge turn out for Christingle service

MORE than 200 people turned out to take part in Hemyock's annual Christingle service.

Faces of young and old shone when Christingles were distributed at the annual service in aid of the Children's Society.

Led by The Reverend David Burton, the parish church was full with more than 200 people.

Readings and prayers were given by the Lay team.

During the service a short video was shown and Hemyock School choir entertained.

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AONB celebrate 25 years of protecting

LOOK out for the special series of events throughout the year on the AONB website or in its bumper edition of the Blackdown Hills Countryside Events booklet that will be available locally.

There will be something for everyone to get involved in from wildlife walks to celebrations of the local heritage, family activity days and special training courses.

The actual birthday of Blackdown Hills AONB designation is June 26th and there will be a special tea party at the Candlelight Inn in Bishopswood to mark the occasion and activities for everyone, young and old.

The anniversary has given the AONB Partnership the ideal opportunity to work more closely with local businesses. Already Otter Brewery and Otter Valley Ice Cream have joined the celebrations. Contributions from the sales of a special summer ale and ice cream will go to the AONB's special Blackdown Hills Countryside Fund, which provides grants towards local community projects. We're looking forward to making 2016 a year to remember!

25 years of the AONB

The Blackdown Hills were designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a nationally important landscape, in 1991 because of its wonderful, unspoilt countryside.

Its special features include the dramatic northern scarp and the upland plateau with its deep valleys where historic villages nestle, and its wonderful patterned landscape and changing views. This striking



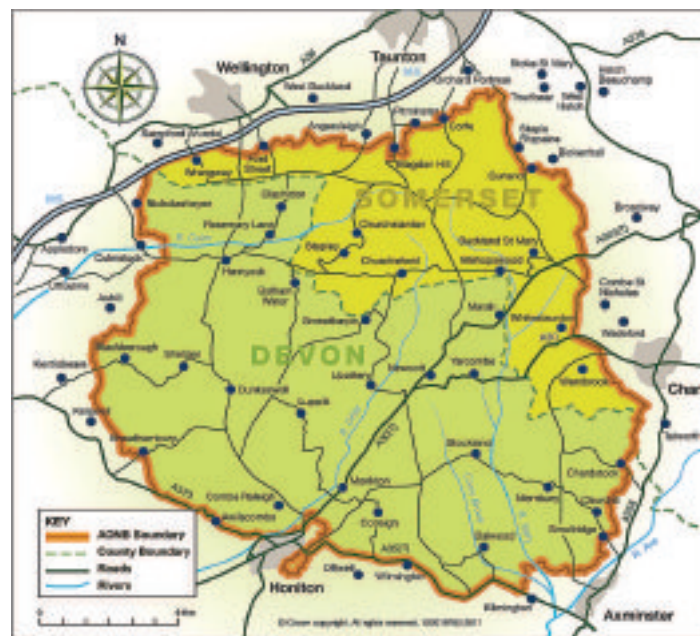
THE Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is 25 years old this year, and is calling for everyone to get involved in its silver jubilee celebrations.
We also look back at what this has meant for the area and some of the achievements

scenery is due to the unique underlying geology of the area. The Blackdown Hills is also home to nationally important wildlife and archaeology and, with its characteristic chert buildings, fields and hedges, the area is considered to be the archetypal English rural landscape.

Rory Stewart MP, minister responsible for protected landscapes, praised AONBs generally saying "they are astonishingly, movingly and staggeringly beautiful areas... and vital to rural life. They protect and care for some of our most cherished landscapes".

Cared for in Partnership

The AONB is looked after by a Partnership made up



Blackdown Hills AONB statistics:

- 370 sq km total area of AONB
- 13,392 population in the AONB
- 2 county councils; 4 district councils
- 430 km of Public Right of Way
- 641 hectares of Open Access Land
- 25 Scheduled Monuments
- 16 Sites of Special Scientific Interest

of representatives from local authorities, government agencies, conservation organisations and community groups who work together to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the AONB. A five-year management plan guides this work that is coordinated by a small staff team based in Hemyock. Core funding for the AONB team is provided by the six local authorities, covering the AONB, and central government through Defra.

Councillor Paul Diviani, AONB chairman since 2005, said: "Over the years numerous volunteers have helped drive the Partnership but outstanding players have been Heather Stallard (Blackdown Hills Business

Association and Chairman of Hemyock Parish Council) and the late, much missed, Geoffrey Sworder (Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and Chairman of Dunkeswell Parish Council)."

Much to celebrate

The Blackdown Hills AONB and its Partnership has developed and changed over the past 25 years. As AONB chairman Paul Diviani explains: "Dates are pivotal in the history of places and people. We arrived at The Kings Arms in Stockland in 1987 and, as a local business, were asked to respond to a survey on whether the Blackdown Hills should be designated an AONB."



VIEW from Woodhayes Farm



WITH the support a SDF grant, young volunteers from Somerset Rural Youth Project carry out practical environmental tasks at Otterhead Lakes



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heritage and hills



■ **THE Princess Royal visits a LEADER+ funded project. Left to right Catherine Leach, Lisa Turner, Princess Royal and David Gordon, then AONB chairman**

"Later I became East Devon District Council's representative on the AONB management group and we soon realised that we needed to help the local economy, if we were to deliver our function of conservation and enhancement of the environment. So we set about the highly ambitious, but successful bid for European funding."

Other key milestones include:

- 1994 - Dave Dixon employed as first AONB project officer based in Stockland.
- 1994 - The Blackdown Hills becomes an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), a programme offering support to landowners who farm in a wildlife friendly way. The AONB has continued to be a target for agri-environment schemes – Countryside Stewardship being the current programme.
- 1997 - First five-year AONB Partnership management plan is produced.
- 2001 - Regular funding is provided by Defra and local authority partners to cover core costs of the staff team and a Sustainable Development Fund for community projects.
- 2002 - First successful application for the European LEADER funding, the Local Products Strategy delivered £1.8million of funding to support local businesses. The next, a Making it Local programme provided (£2.4million) across the Blackdown Hills and East Devon AONBs and the surrounding areas and the current programme will deliver £1.7million for projects

across a similar area.

- 2004 - AONB launches its Sustainable Development Fund to support local community projects.
- 2006 - the five-year Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme, led by the Forestry Commission, provides £3million mainly from Heritage Lottery Fund for a wide range of conservation, access, community and skills projects.
- 2009 - Establishment of the Blackdown Hills Parish Network bringing together the 41 parishes of AONB to work together on a community plan and other AONB-wide issues.
- 2012 - Dunkeswell War Stories – a collation of true stories of life on the American airbase and in the village in WWII.
- 2013 - The Blackdown Hills Countryside Fund, a special community fund administered by the Devon Community Foundation, established to support wildlife heritage and education projects.
- 2015 - Blackdown Hills Natural Futures project, a £443,000 project primarily funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, begins delivering wildlife conservation, training and support for local community wildlife projects.

For further information on the Blackdown Hills AONB, visit our website at www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk

To find out more about the current Blackdown Hills Natural Futures project, visit www.blackdownhillsnaturalfutures.org



■ **VOLUNTEERS discover the deserted Medieval village of Playstreet, near Bickenhall, part of the Neroche project**



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Blackdowns clubs and organisations

Sampford Arundel WI

December meeting report:

'Twas a few days before Christmas,
When all thro' the houses
No creatures were moving
Not even no mouses.
For the WI members
Of Sampford Arundel – no less-
Had gone to the Beam Bridge
(For them, only the best)
And after the feasting and wine
(just a smidge)
Then came even more fun
For Santa had presents for all
everyone.
When all of a sudden there came
such a clatter
Their minds were in whirls
What could be the matter?
'Twas The Calendar Girls
(But of course fully clothed)
Then a lovely reading of Christ-
masses old.
Next, to tell his sad tale a penguin
was pressed
(He'd only come in to get out of
the cold)
A ukulele (to which nothing will
rhyme)
Filled the rest of the wonderfully
happy time
Carols – then 'Auld Lang Syne' of
course.
Now, we really must end, which all
will endorse,
So to your staff and readers, if
they've not taken flight
Merry Christmas to all, and to all a
good night.

■ **MEMBER of Sampford Arundel WI, Joan Knowlman, has won a national writing competition.**

The national WI competition required members to write a "WI President's log - Stardate 2115" imagining what a president's annual report may sound like. She is pictured with fellow WI member Sheila Netley who played Lady Denman in a recent musical about the WI also written by Joan.



Hemyock WI

The December meeting of Hemyock WI turned out to be very busy.

Names were taken for the birthday meal at the Ashill Inn on January 19th.

Future county events were quickly dealt with as members were keen to get started on the lantern making.

President Lyn Taylor had attended a 'lantern making session' and had brought all the necessary bits and pieces for members to embark on the task of making 12 large stars. With bamboo and willow, special tissue paper which dried clear and tight, the members worked in pairs. It was not easy as the stars were made in 3-D format but when the lights were put in, all were pleased with the result.

Everyone enjoyed the well-earned bring and share supper and agreed to bring the lanterns to the village parade a few days later Lyn reminded

members that the Reading Group will meet at Lower Cottage on Tuesday, January 5th.

The competition for a Festive Recipe was won jointly by Karen and Elaine. The Flower of the month was brought by Bridget. Lyn closed the meeting by wishing everyone a Happy Christmas.

Hemyock WI meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm, but not in January. Visitors will be made welcome. More details from Lyn on 01823 680104.



Blackdown Hills Transition Group

THERE are many practical elements to be addressed in considering the future, facing the huge challenges associated with climate change.

Discussions, plans and schemes have been and are being embraced on individual, group and large organisational levels. It is encouraging to imagine the myriad small lights the world over, endeavouring to make positive changes that will benefit all species and our future on this beautiful planet.

However, we are not tending to the increasingly urgent need as quickly as we have to, if we are not to further damage our habitat. I recently attended a conference in London on "The Psychology of Inspired Collective Climate Change Action (and what gets in its way)". While climate change anxiety and denial is becoming more widely recognised as a psychological problem, less attention has been given to the psychology of a positive "yes we can" response to tackling this daunting global situation.

The conference sought to understand the way negative

and hopeless feelings towards climate change actually paralyze people's ability to engage proactively on this front.

Nine speakers, eminent in their fields of expertise, gave a series of TED style presentations illustrating the psychological patterns we adopt to cope with despairing situations, through avoidance and denial. The message was that we have to face the fear and then go forward and that the key element of any solution to climate change lies in how we think and feel together, what we can do and where hope lies.

Mental planning and physical effort is essential but sometimes it is easier to engage the mind than embrace the emotions that arise when we consider the impact of climate change, devastation of land and cultures, over-population, energy crises, annihilation of species. An accepted and essential aspect of the Transition movement is that we need to engage all parts of us in considering changes we have to make. We can use the challenges we face to make a better world but for this we need to take our Heart and Soul

with us. We have to be in our hearts as well as our minds, then compassion can play its part but for this to happen we have first to face the heart-rending situation. Then together we can find the freedom to take action in building a happier world.

At the beginning of December, the annual Winter Gathering was held at Eastcott Barn in Sheldon. This is the fourth year in which people have come together around the winter fire, offering what they will, receiving what they need. It is a contribution of all involved towards our support of each other in going forward, in focussing on the abundance of our lives, of sharing food, animated conversations, ideas, healing sessions, music, laughter. It may not be big stuff in the face of the often overwhelming issues but the more we come together with positive intent and hopefulness, the more good will and love for humanity and our Earth will grow.

Jennifer Ash
(Psychotherapist)
Blackdown Hills Transition,
Heart and Soul Group.



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what's on in and around the Blackdown Hills

South West artists feature in first exhibition of New Year

ARTISTS of the South West Academy bring together a new body of work focusing on paintings, photographs and prints in an inspiring new exhibition at THG (Thelma Hulbert Gallery).

The academicians are well known across the region and beyond and include many established names such as Professor Alan Cotton, FRSA who is represented by Messum's Gallery, London and Peter Randall-Page, RA, whose sculptures feature in permanent National collections including Tate Britain.

The South West Academy is a registered charity dedicated to advancing the creation and appreciation of art in the South West region. Its core

membership, the academicians are outstanding practitioners of fine and applied arts with varied practices, backgrounds and styles. Their mission is to celebrate, support and contribute to the best of the visual arts in the South West and to build links between artists, the public, exhibition venues and galleries.

"We are delighted to be hosting the South West Academy's first exhibition at THG", said THG Curator/Manager Angela Blackwell.

"One of THG's founding aims is to support South West based artists and this is a great opportunity to showcase both established and emerging artists from across the region.

"We are particularly pleased to welcome back Peter Randall-Page after his acclaimed solo exhibition at THG in 2014."

Chair of the Trustees of the Academy, Phil Creek said: "We feel that this past year has been an invigorating one for the South West Academy. There have been two exhibitions at Exeter Castle and the Summer Exhibition at The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, followed by the Annual Open in September.

"The academicians are honoured that THG has agreed to host our first show in 2016. The academy has a new-found vitality which continues with this new exhibition at the THG."

Alan Cotton, whose work 'Connemara - Golden Light Over the Twelve Pins' features in the exhibition, described his inspiration.

"I love working along the West Coast of

Ireland. You get this wonderful citric light streaking across the landscape, creating fantastic areas of light and shade," he said.

"My drawings and watercolours of Donegal, Connemara and the Dingle Peninsula are usually done very quickly, capturing a fleeting moment of light. Then it's gone and the rain comes. Many of my Irish drawing books are spattered with rain-drops.

"Along the West Coast of Ireland there is always a great urgency to capture the images because of the changing patterns of light and shade. It is this urgency, the chasing after the light that gives an energy and vitality to the paintings."

The youngest academician is emerging artist, Greg Ramsden, whose career was launched on the back of a prize from South West Academy.

He said: "I am indebted to the academy for helping me to set up as an artist. I used the prize money from the inaugural Lionel Aggett Memorial Prize to open my first studio and gallery.

"Unlike many established academicians my painting is more experimental as my work changes and progresses - I am pushing the boundaries all the time."

All of the work in the exhibition and the South West Academy's new hardback publication 'Art, People and Place' will be available to purchase throughout the exhibition.

The South West Academy Exhibition runs from January 9th - February 13th 2016.

Admission is free but donations are welcome. All donations support the THG learning programme.



■ ALAN Cotton - Connemara - Golden Light Over the Twelve Pins



■ ESPALIER, Peter Randall-Page silk screen

diary dates

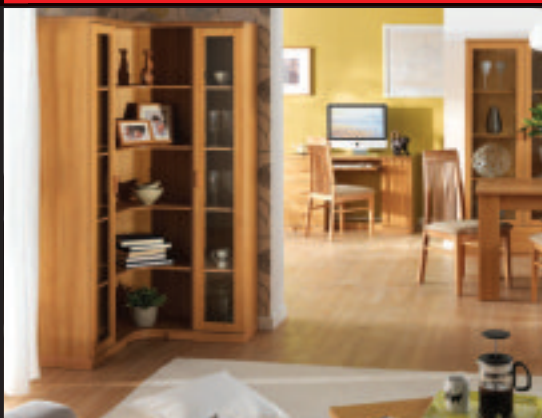
If you are holding an event in the Blackdown Hills and would like it included as a Diary Date in the paper please email the details to alex@tindlenews.co.uk.

Don't forget to include the date, time, place, organiser's name and a brief description of the event.

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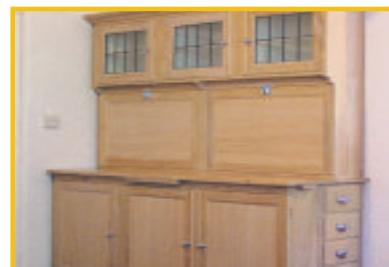
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